

Department of Permitting Services (DPS)

Performance Plan FY10

Contribution to Montgomery County Results: DPS contributes to the following results -

- A Responsive and Accountable Government
- An Effective and Efficient Transportation Network
- Safe Streets and Secure Neighborhoods
- Vital Living for All of Our Residents

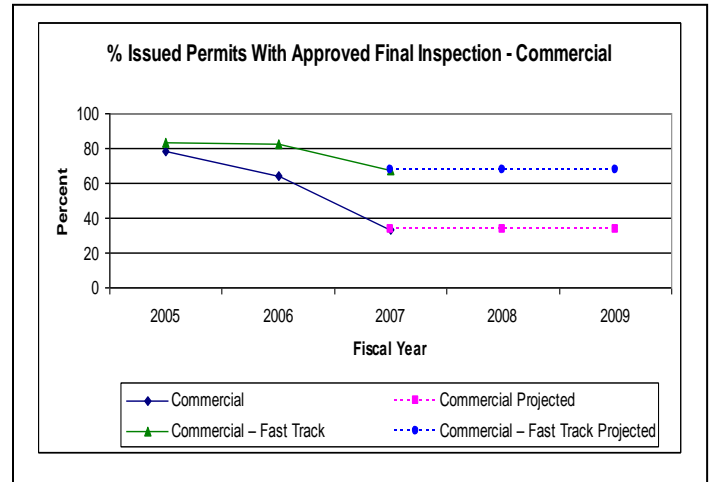
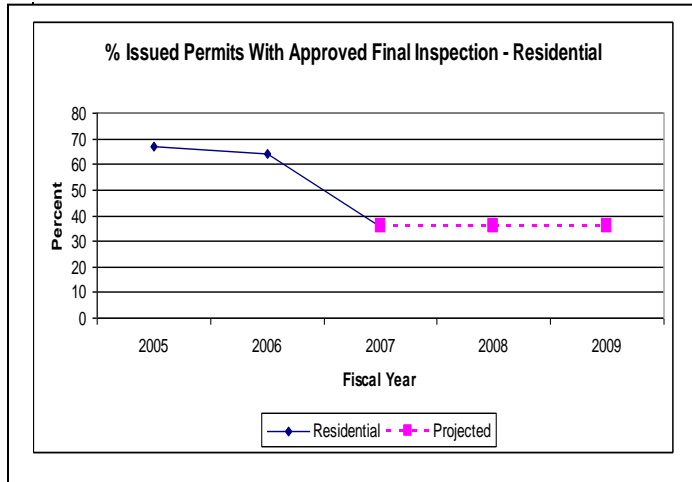
What DPS Does and for Whom	How Much
<p><u>Overall</u></p> <p>The mission of the Department of Permitting Services is to provide the highest quality of public service while ensuring compliance with Montgomery County's development and construction standards.</p>	<p>Size of Budget in Total: \$27,067,180</p> <p>Number of Employees: 197 work years (WYs)</p>
<p><u>Construction Safety</u></p> <p>Promotes life safety in buildings and other structures.</p>	<p>DPS impacts anyone who enters any building structure in Montgomery County – except for those people in Rockville and Gaithersburg (have their own Permitting Agencies). DPS easily impacts a million people on a daily basis.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Protection</u></p> <p>Implements environmental programs to ensure environment protected from potential degradation resulting from construction activities.</p>	<p>The environmental programs that DPS is responsible for administering are executed throughout the County. They include: sediment control, stormwater management and well and septic programs.</p>
<p><u>Plan Review</u></p> <p>Reviews plans and ensures compliance with existing codes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$9,202,840 • 68 WYs • 55,000 plans
<p><u>Permit and License Issuance</u></p> <p>Issues permits and licenses to Applicants, Permit Runners, Homeowners, Builders, Architects, Business Owners, Vendors, Architects, Developers, Electricians, and Engineers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,413,440 • 41 WYs • 10,491 permits and 2,504 licenses
<p><u>Inspections and Investigations</u></p> <p>Conducts inspections of permitted work and investigates complaints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$9,473,510 • 82 WYs • 121,813 inspections and 2,068 investigations
<p><u>Inquiries, Outreach, and Coordination</u></p> <p>Responds to inquiries from the public and engages the community in dialogue regarding the same. Coordinates work with internal and external agencies as well as non-profit and civic associations and elected officials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2,977,390 • 6 WYs • 1,890 information requests

Performance:

IMPACT (GOT IT RIGHT) MEASURES:

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- **% Permits with a Final Inspection**



- **Construction Safety**

Seventeen (17) percent of the inspections DPS performs do not conform to applicable construction codes and standards and are therefore failed.

- **Qualitative Assessments from Independent, External Audits**

- Insurance Services Office (ISO) Report (every 3-5 years) / Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCGES). ISO has a set of 28 criteria that they review and evaluate. Then, ISO assigns a classification from 1-10 (with 1 representing exemplary commitment to building code enforcement). DPS' current score in the category of one and two family dwellings is a 5; commercial structural is a 4. A new assessment is due to be completed in 2010.
- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Review (every two years). MDE's criteria to evaluate sediment control program effectiveness consists of: complete approved plans, adequate implementation of plans, adequate maintenance of devices, and successful enforcement of violations. During its most recent assessment, MDE inspected 64 randomly selected, active construction sites and found that on 100% of the sites appropriate enforcement measures had been taken by DPS inspectors. A new assessment is due to be completed in 2010.

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Story Behind the Performance:

Contributing Factors:

- **Final Inspections Provide Assurance and Protection of Community.** When it comes to land development permits (sediment control, right of way, etc), close-out/final procedures are clear and closely followed. Inspection staff is assigned to individual permits allowing ownership and follow up to get extensions when work is not completed in the timeframe allowed under the permit.
- **External Audits Have Produced Very Good Results.** In late 2007 when MDE inspected a sampling of active construction sites, MDE reported finding most of those sites in good condition and in compliance with erosion and sediment control requirements. Moreover, MDE noted that when sites had problems, DPS' use of enforcement was successful for correcting violations found. MDE considers DPS to be a "model" agency in the area of sediment control and other environmental matters. In its report, MDE even commended the DPS sediment control and stormwater inspection staff for their efforts.
- **Knowledgeable, Professional, Tenured Staff.** Many DPS employees have been in the department for 10 or more years. They serve on national, industry committees and participate in code creation.

Restricting Factors:

- **Lack of Final Inspections in Residential Building.** On the other hand, the lack of final building inspections increases odds that DPS' regulatory objectives will not be met. This lack of final inspections also does not provide customers the assurance that their properties are safe and have met regulatory requirements. Residential final inspections are currently voluntary. Customers call for them, if they want to. Two divisions in the same department treat final inspections inconsistently. If Bill 24-09 goes into effect, this problem will be resolved.
- **Internal, Technical Training Program Needs Improvement.** DPS needs to provide systematic business function training. About four years ago, field supervisors were collapsed into single manager positions. Since then, there is little time for managers to fill in the training gap. For example, with the collapsing of positions, managers are so burdened with administrative responsibilities that they rarely make field visits to determine training needs. The DPS leadership staff just completed a comprehensive training needs assessment for every DPS job classification. The next step is to develop the training programs. Then, we will implement the training programs and evaluate their effectiveness.

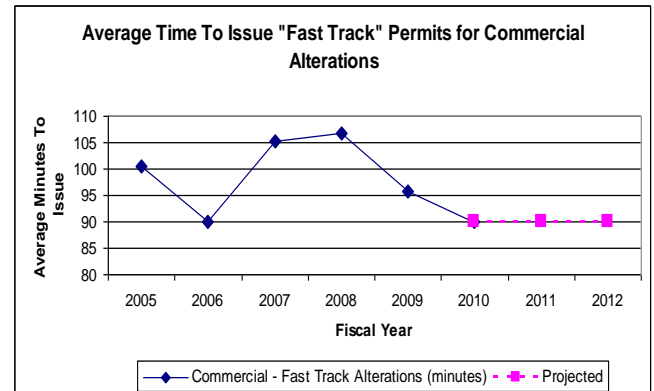
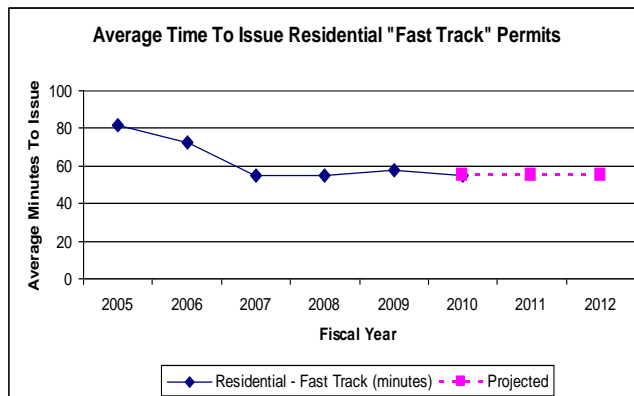
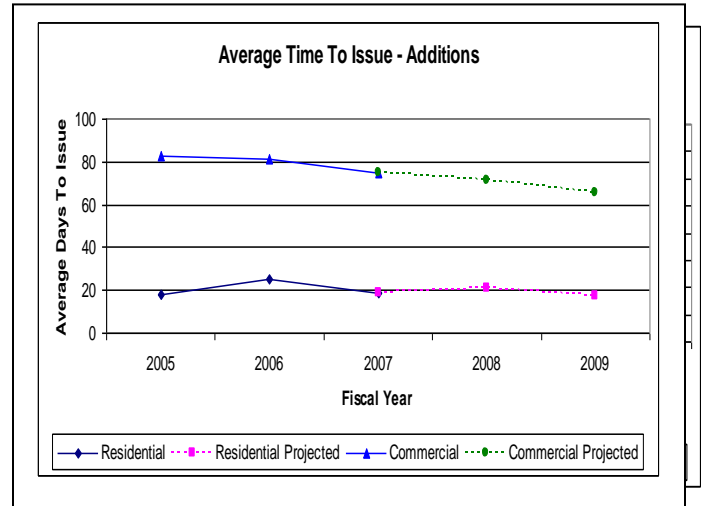
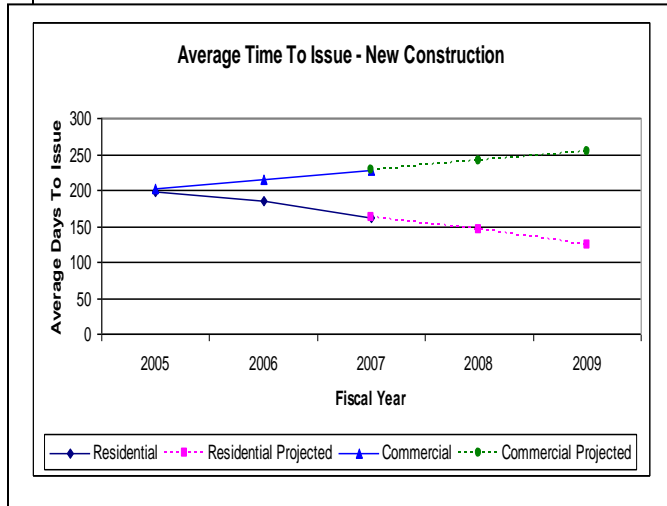
Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Through the Code Enforcement Work Group, pursue legislative changes to ensure that permits have time limits and enforce laws requiring final inspections.
2. Implement business practice modifications to ensure residential final inspections are completed and use and occupancy certificates are subsequently issued.
3. Develop a plan for garnering the County a 3 or better Building Code rating for both residential and commercial categories when the assessment period occurs in 2010.
4. Use the MDE criteria to independently measure DPS performance.
5. Develop a systematic technical training program.

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TIMELINESS AND “EASE OF USE” MEASURES:

- **Average Time to Issue Permits**



Contributing Factors:

- **Unique Service - Permit Processing Facilitation.** The newly created Customer Service Division (replacing the Casework Management Division) is emphasizing community outreach (focusing on specific customer segments) and public education. The other significant function of the Division is to facilitate the green tape process and to help first and only time customers to navigate the permitting process. Permit Technicians in this Division have knowledge in all areas of the permitting business.
- **Institution of Fast Track Counters.** The fast track counters in residential and commercial plan review have greatly contributed to the swift processing of customer requests. However, with the growing complexity of plans, this service can be upgraded with a few minor changes that will keep up with the trend toward customers submitting more complex plans.

Additionally, with the exception of well and septic reviews, the Land Development Division had been almost completely out of the loop on providing fast track services. The Land Development Division's presence at the fast track counter was increased in early November 2009. Now we are able to address

issues related to drainage and right of way infringement before they manifest themselves as complaints.

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- **Improved Plan Review Tracking Practices.** In FY 2009, we began to track the time frame for the plan reviews or permit issuance that are on the “department’s clock” as a subset of total review times. This would mean tracking the time that the plans are actually in our office, which can also give us an indication of lag time between submissions for each review.

In addition, we now know what staff member has custody of plans submitted. We have improved customer satisfaction by knowing the plan location and status at all times.

Restricting Factors:

- **Permitting Information System Upgrades Must Keep Pace With Customer Demands.** To conduct most of types of business with DPS, customers must physically visit our one facility or send us mail. No permits can be applied for on-line because the current version of the Hansen Permitting Information System doesn’t provide the ability to apply for a permit (or pay for the permit) on line.
- **Underutilization of Website Capabilities.** It is sometimes difficult for customers to maneuver the web site and independently find information. DPS staff receives calls on a daily basis from customers wanting step-by-step guidance on locating needed information.

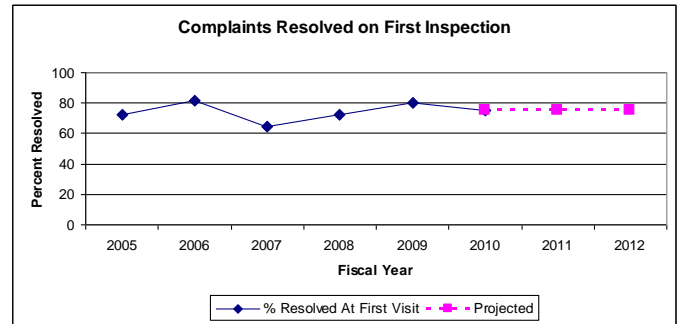
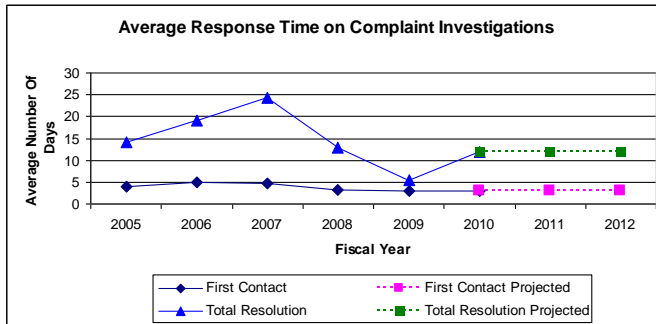
Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Implement the restructuring plan for the department, particularly the concepts for a revived Customer Service Division.
2. Monitor plan tracking process improvements, which were implemented on October 30, 2008 and update the website so that anyone can easily look up the status of any plan. (Plan review status on line is now available.)
3. Implement the new version of the Hansen Permitting Information System.
4. Re-design the website, but begin with making sure that the information on the website is accurate.
5. Design public education programs targeted to the residential customer and other one-time only customers, such as faith-based organizations.

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PUBLIC CONFIDENCE MEASURES:

- Complaint Investigations



Contributing Factors:

- Customer Satisfaction Data from Current Surveys

- Instituted a new survey instrument via survey monkey in FY 2009.
- Thirty-two percent of all respondents were “very satisfied” with their interactions with DPS and 27% were satisfied the most with “customer friendly staff”
- Open ended comments revealed that the permitting process is not transparent and is not understandable
- One-third of the survey respondents came to DPS for residential building permits.

Story Behind the (last three years of) Performance:

Contributing Factors:

- **Point of Service Customer Surveys.** Customer survey data is now collected on all aspects of our service, not just office interactions. The survey monkey provides automatic data analysis. We need to find more ways to get customers to take the survey.
- **More Refined Complaint Data.** Complaint requests that are resolved on the first inspection need to be categorized to reflect the actual disposition of the complaint. The disposition categories are: no violation found; case referred to another agency; violations found, but resolution was achieved. If additional investigations are required because resolution could not be achieved on the first visit, then a case file will be opened. Before the start of FY 2010, all DPS staff was trained to use this consistent complaint handling procedure. Implementation of this practice began in July 2009.

Restricting Factors:

- **Customer Perception Improvements Are Needed.** There is anecdotal evidence of a perception that the development community receives better service and programs than residential customers. We currently have no way of determining (1) how widely the perception is held and (2) if this perception is a reality. While DPS provides fast track services for both residential and commercial building customers, there are other special services that only commercial customers receive such as daily pre-design

meetings. Without survey data collected over time, it is difficult to know what types of programs will better serve the residential customer population.

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Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Continue to analyze and act on customer feedback data. Re-evaluate the new survey instrument to ensure that it is effective and provides useful information.
2. Dedicate resources in the restructured Casework Management Division (or now known as the Customer Services Division) to execute outreach activities, public education, and survey analysis.
3. A concentration of the number of service requests on the maps presented appeared within the boundaries served by the Mid-County Regional Services Center. DPS is currently gathering data on the service request details in this area such as: a report with a count of all service requests by type in the Mid-County Regional Services Center and within each civic association; and a map showing the concentration of service requests in each civic association area in the Mid-County Regional Services Center. DPS will partner with the Mid-County Regional Services Center and civic associations to conduct outreach events in the form of street fairs and formal presentations at mutually agreed upon locations. The GIS maps and data along with observations from DPS, Civic Associations and the Mid-County Regional Services Center will provide the background needed to design, develop and deliver outreach events and materials. DPS will use this approach as a model for outreach events in the remaining four Regional Services Centers.

Appendix A: Budget

Appendix B: Implementation

- **DPS' actions (what we propose to do to improve performance) are outlined in detail in our Accountability Plans/Reports. In addition, the Accountability Plans/Reports contain timelines and deliverables for all actions proposed in this document.**

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ADDENDUM

Responsive and Sustainable Leadership has been the cornerstone of the County Executive's vision for Montgomery County government. To advance this vision, we have identified the following overarching goals for all County departments. For each of the following goals, please list your accomplishments and/or expected results.

1. Collaborations and Partnerships: Department actively participates in collaborations and partnerships with other departments to improve results beyond the scope of the department's own performance measures.

- DPS is developing public education activities that will include code enforcement information from other departments as it relates to DPS code enforcement responsibilities. The expected outcome is to have an informed public regarding their responsibility to be in compliance with codes enforced by DPS. As a result of having an informed public Montgomery County communities will be healthy and safe.
- **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** – DPS will collaborate with DEP to provide outreach and public education on green building construction through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program. Well & Septic works closely with MCDEP on issues of public water and sewer availability and future needs.
- **Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Department of Public Works and Transportation, Department of Fire and Rescue, and Department of Environmental Protection** - DPS will partner with these departments to improve day to day operations as well as to look for opportunities to reduce inefficiencies where our business functions interface. We are working in conjunction with these departments to find solutions to some sensitive issues such as overcrowding and Clean Water Task Force initiatives.
- **Design For Life Committee** – DPS partnered with this committee made up of "The Commission for People with Disabilities," Maryland National Capital Building Industry Association, and the private sector to implement a voluntary program to increase accessibility and livability of single family homes.
- **Regional Service Centers** – DPS is researching the feasibility of decentralizing services to government service centers. DPS would like to leverage the community presence that the service centers enjoy by assisting them with educational forums and problem solving ventures.
- **Municipalities** – DPS will collaborate with municipalities to improve customer service by providing permit information to them specific to their area.
- Code Enforcement Group – proposed zoning and building legislative changes

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2. Innovations: Department actively seeks to be innovative in its efforts to improve performance.

- **Focus on Developing Residential Customer Outreach Programs.** Realizing that many residential customers use the services of DPS one time, DPS would like to ensure that the experience is a good one. We need to help customers understand how to easily use the services DPS offers by providing outreach services where the customers are – such as at home improvement stores and community meeting places. This could be considered a non-traditional place to reach out to customers. We would also like to increase our outreach to the faith community. Provide special shepharding services to customer segments who are challenged because they don't frequently use the permit process.
- **Offer More Customer Service Options.** Phone in the public area of the department so that visitors don't have to stand in line to contact a DPS employee for a meeting or other questions. Dedicated customer self service center with computer access.
- **Implement Proactive Department Diagnostic Program.** DPS has a need to proactively monitor its day to day business rather than waiting for infrequent external audits. DPS needs to obtain quality data on a regular basis that could possibly validate the external audits which are infrequently conducted.
- **Instituted the on-line Complaint Acceptance Process.**

3. Effective and Productive Use of the Workforce/Resources: Department actively works to effectively and productively use its workforce/resources, including, but not limited to, better management of overtime, implementation of productivity improvements, reduction of ongoing costs, and efficient use of other resources.

- Development of an intermediate track for plan review. We already had green tape and fast track. Now this process seeks out those projects which are not large but not small and gets them on their own track and expedites the review when normally they could be behind large projects and suffer significant yet unnecessary delays.
- Plan tracking process.

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4. Succession Planning: Department actively plans for changes in its workforce, in order to maintain continuity of services, develop staff capabilities, maintain, knowledge transfer, and enhance performance.

- **Maintain continuity of services – what are our critical operational functions?**
 - Maintain the DPS Customer Service Center: assist walk-in customers, schedule inspections, handle complaints, process information requests, manage green tape projects
 - Process permits
 - Review project plans including zoning reviews/approvals
 - Perform inspections, enforce special exceptions, and investigate complaints
 - Maintain continuity of DPS' IT services and operations:
 - a. Permit System data (online, archived tapes), DPS Web Site, GIS, Pictometry
 - b. Database servers & Oracle, DPS' disaster recovery server (resides in the County Data Center), Hansen 8 application servers
- **Develop staff capabilities – what are our high risk positions and critical functions performed by current employees?**
 - In the Well and Septic Section, Permitting Services Inspectors typically begin as more entry-level Sanitarians. As they accumulate knowledge and seniority they are promoted- first within their own job classification; but eventually they form a "pool" of candidates to become Permitting Services Plan Reviewers (PSPR). Currently there are 3 PSPR in this section. Two are nearing "typical" retirement age. The skill set for this position is unique; and finding experienced PSPR's would be much more difficult than finding entry-level employees.
 - Case Project Management and Green Tape Projects – One Permit Technician (PT) had been designated to Green Tape Projects, but we are now training all Customer Information PTs to do the work.
 - Public Outreach Activities – We have one certified Spanish interpreter in the Customer Service Division
 - Senior IT Specialist – One IT member with GIS knowledge, comprehensive systems knowledge and business process knowledge
 - IT Specialist III – One IT member with imaging system expertise (hardware, database, configuration, application)
- **Transfer knowledge and enhance performance – what is our strategy to maintain and/or transfer knowledge?**
 - Leaders on the Same Page workshops and Departmental Meetings
 - Prepared SOPs for each business process.
 - The strategy with PTs is to spread knowledge around. Make sure that staff is trained and knowledgeable about the permit process. Staff is also trained in the management process and has rotating experience service as "PT of the Day"; being the single point-of-contact for managing the daily schedule, problem intervention and any necessary reporting to the acting manager.
 - Most transfer knowledge comes from on the job training and cross training.
 - a. Document IT configuration (DPS IT Intranet)
 - b. Document IT procedures (DPS IT Intranet)
 - c. Test the IT procedures (primary, secondary/backup)
 - d. Share knowledge within the IT Team (team meetings, work sessions, 1-on-1)
 - e. Team participation in tasks
 - f. Rotating responsibilities
 - g. Skill matrix → gap analysis → corrective action
 - h. Transfer Hansen and historical business knowledge to Senior IT Specialist (primary) and DPS IT Team

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5. Internal Controls and Risk Management: Department actively assess its internal control strengths, weaknesses, and risks regarding compliance with laws and regulations, recording of financial transactions and stewardship over the County's assets. As subset of this goal, each department also manages risk pertaining to improvement in workplace safety, decrease work-related injuries, and reduce County exposure to litigation.

- DPS is developing a training program for employees that will prepare them to be in compliance with applicable laws and DPS business practices. The expected outcome is to provide employees with the knowledge and skills to perform their job and ultimately provide improved customer service.
- DPS has conducted an internal audit to assess the fee collection process for commercial building fees. This process will be duplicated for all other types of fees. The expected outcome will be an improved fee collection process and improved accuracy and accountability in the collection of fees.
- We have recently undertaken a comprehensive look at our internal lab area, where potentially hazardous chemicals are stored to stabilize chemical analysis of drinking water samples. As a result, safety improvements have been made to protect DPS personnel.
- Failed inspections cannot be entered into the computer system without stating the reason for the failure.

6. Environmental Stewardship: Department actively makes appropriate changes to workplace operations, workflow, employee behavior, equipment use, and public interactions to become more energy efficient, reduce its environmental footprint and implement other environmentally responsible practice.

- Tree Fact Sheets – minimize environmental impact during construction
- Require only one copy for new single family dwelling submissions reducing the amount of paper handled in the department
- Develop a comprehensive plan for monitoring and reducing as paper use and printing costs